

as you wish. Please do not argue any more."

Realizing what she meant, and fearing lest her resolution might give way under further strain, I guided her back to the skeleton body of the machine.

"Throw your light here, De Vigne, so the lady can see," I ordered. "Now, Mademoiselle, place your foot on this cross-piece; now on the other. Yes, that is right, you can support yourself with the guy-wire. This is the hardest part—getting on board. There is only one step more; take the seat to the left; now you are all right. Wrap your coat tightly about your knees, and press the edge down under your feet so the wind cannot get underneath; the air will be chill outside."

I struggled into my own coat, and pulled on my gloves, looking up to where she was perched, her face plainly visible in the light.

"You are comfortable?" I asked, feeling my voice would encourage.

"Yes, but are you not coming?"

"In a moment; there are a few things to be attended to below first. You better put on your gloves; they are in the coat pocket. Now, De Vigne, douse that light, and we'll throw open the doors. Kelly, take hold here."

They were heavy enough to require the strength of all three of us to roll them back, yet made little noise. The cool night air poured in through the wide opening, and there was a dull gray haze visible along the eastern sky, the first faint glimmer of approaching dawn. The stars were paling, and there was already sufficient reflection of light so as to reveal a row of houses between us and the horizon, although the wide field in our front remained dark with shadow. I endeavored to study the surface, but could see clearly only for a few feet, yet the depth of open space was amply sufficient, and the land appeared level, and reasonably smooth. But for my passenger I should have felt no restraint, but with her still in mind, I walked forward a hundred feet, perhaps, testing the ground for possible pitfalls, and returned satisfied. The two men lingered at the door, De Vigne testing the propeller.

"Now, boys, get in here, and roll her out. Take hold of the frame opposite me, Kelly. Carefully now, so as not to jar things going over the sill. Hold tight to both arms of your seat, Mademoiselle; now all together—easy there! a little more to the right, De Vigne. She clears; that is enough."

We were safely outside, the sky above dark but clearing, the pale stars still gleaming fitfully, the only sound recognizable the rattle of a far-off street car. Behind us was the black shadow of the hangar, its wide door yawning, and the monoplane, with light framework, delicate tracery of wires, and wide-spread wings resting there on spindle wheels, in that spectral light, appeared phantom-like and unreal. I laid hand on it almost dreaming, as I gazed up at the girl's indistinct form perched in the seat above. I could not see her face, yet knew she would be staring down at us in anxious fear lest something occur to send her away alone.

"So far so good," I said cheerily, to hearten her. "Now, Kelly, you do exactly as De Vigne says—nothing more, or less. You understand what you are to do afterward, De Vigne."

"Oui, Monsieur."

"There is to be no talking, only to the consul."

"Oui, Monsieur."

I shook hands with him, and climbed up through the light framework to my seat at the right, fastening the strap across my body, and then leaning over and securely buckling hers. De Vigne was already at the propeller prepared to set its blades in motion, and I took time to touch her gloved hand with my own, observant to the whiteness of her face beneath the shade of the cap visor.

"Do—do you always strap yourself

in like this?" she asked. "Is there danger of falling?"

"There are 'pockets' in the air," I explained, "and occasionally the drop is considerable. It is safer, that is all, and permits freer use of the hands. You will not mind at all after we once get away from the earth. This is the greatest sport in the world; you are going to like it."

Whatever she answered was lost in the sudden whirl of the propeller, and then I heard De Vigne's voice:

"Ready, Monsieur?"

I straightened up, my feet firm on the levers, hands gripping the wheel, every nerve tense, my eyes on the dim glow of light ahead. This was the real test, the next few moments, and I must be alert, prepared to meet any emergency. After we once took the air, and had safely cleared that row of houses, I could afford to think of other things, but not now.

"Yes, all right—let her go!"

I felt the swift leap of the delicate framework under us; the throb of the motor, silent, but no less powerful, thrilling through the taut wires; the jar of the rubber-tired wheels as they gripped the earth. I heard De Vigne shouting orders to his companion, the increasing hum of the more rapidly revolving propeller blade; the slight creaking of the wings. Then we seemed to leap from off the ground, careening slightly, but as instantly straightening as I touched the controlling lever, and headed away into the gray east. I was cool enough now, while feeling all the exhilaration of the moment. The dark earth shadow slipped away beneath, seemed rather to fall from us; there was no sensation of flight, except for the rush of cold air against our faces, or a swift leap of the blood, when the machine swerved slightly as it mounted steadily higher. One of the men below cried out something, but the words were indistinguishable; looking down I could perceive nothing except black shadows, distorted and grotesque. The whirl of the propeller became less noticeable, and the motor worked almost noiselessly, emitting just enough sound to assure me it was in powerful action. We cleared the row of houses by a hundred feet, ever mounting higher into the gloomy, gray sky. In front of us now, a grim, magnificent picture in the wan light of the early dawn, spread the waters of the lake. I could perceive bursts of white where waves dashed against the brea' water, and beyond a gray shimmer, disappearing into mist. Below, on land, it was yet night, and the myriads of street lamps blazed gorgeously through the gloom, marking the vast extent of the city. Far away to the left the lighthouse on a distant pier shot forth rays of alternating white and red into the enveloping haze. It was a fairy picture of neither night nor day, full of spectral shadows, and the gleam of strange lights, blending into the ghastly gray of the dawning, with the somber waters dashing against the shore, and the earth a shapeless gloom, yet alow with color. Just beneath us an engine passed, a burst of red flame showing through the open furnace door, painting a wierd picture on the black screen for an instant, and as quickly blotted. Noises unrecognizable, rose to us out of the dark void, blending into a dull roar, which grew fainter as we swept onward, out over the silent water.

From the height we had now attained we could perceive a faint tinge of red far to the eastward, with purple streamers piercing the low-hanging mist which still obscured the horizon. Beneath this upper light the fog floated, a dun-colored cloud, its higher undulating waves violet tinted, and assuming fanciful shapes. With careful pressure I brought the monoplane to a straight course, and took a long, sweeping turn toward the left, gradually opening the engine throttle. The dim light failed to reveal the figures of the register, but there was no necessity for reading these to know that we were traveling at high speed. The mad whirl of the propeller, the swift chug of the almost noiseless motor, the sweep of wind lashing against our faces, and

singing through the taut wires, the quick response of the delicate machine to the slightest deviation of the rudder, the trembling of the light framework, all combined to tell the story. I felt to the full the deep exhilaration of rapid movement, the consciousness of power. This was indeed life, an experience wherein an hour was well worth a year of ordinary existence. We swept swiftly past the great city, blazing with lights along its water front, still sleeping in its night shadow, as though we were a wild bird breasting its way northward in search of solitude. We glimpsed the curving line of shore, the blacker outlines of piers, the dim tracery of vessels, still illumined by harbor lights; watching them all disappear as though some mysterious power had swept them from existence. Every instant, every throb of the motor, brought with it a new vista, a fresh revelation, an unexpected marvel. We were on wing, buoyant, free, sweeping through the gray sky; the paling stars still visible in the west, the sweet morning air fresh on our faces. All that was sordid and mean had been left far below; about us, uncharted, a vast expanse, was the clear, pure atmosphere of the heights. We were alone in another world, isolated from our race, and all its hatred and strifes, the masters of a new realm, the bold navigators of a new sea.

Once, way down below, a tiny thing to our eyes as we swept breathlessly past, a vessel showed dimly, steaming southward, a great white passenger boat, no doubt, heading for the harbor. A glimpse, and we were gone. Once we encountered a "pocket," and glided down, swift as a falling arrow, until we saw the white caps cresting the waves, only to mount again, like some frightened bird into the higher levels, our great wings swooping to the renewed pressure of air. Then I pointed our course into the northeast, my eyes on the compass screwed into the arm of my seat. The shore line disappeared, and we swept forward into the increasing mist, now golden tinged all about us by the first penetrating rays of the sun, but below a dull gray cloud, hiding the distant waters. We were alone—alone; a mere atom, winging silent passage through the sky, in a world of our own.

For the first time I turned my head and looked at her, my heart throbbing to the sudden recollection of her presence. This was not all new to me; I had felt the rare exhilaration of such flight often before, but how would the strange experience appeal to her? Her silence, her strained attitude, the shapeless figure, muffled in the great coat, told nothing. I could see the contour of her face beneath the cap shadow, and it appeared white in the spectral glare, her eyes staring straight ahead into the gray smother. I touched the gloved hand, where it still grasped the arm of the seat, and she glanced around quickly, smiling bravely as her eyes met mine.

"You are not frightened then Mademoiselle," I said, relieved instantly by their expression. "The height does not trouble you?"

"No," she answered, shading her mouth with one hand, so as to speak freely. "I—I do not seem to have had time; it has been so swift, so unexpected, so marvelous. I hardly knew when we left the earth; there was no sensation whatever."

"You expected to be dizzy? to experience the same feeling as when gazing down from a great height?"

"Yes, of course! I could never bear that, and the very thought sickened me. But I have not felt so in the

least; it has been more like a dream than a reality—only—only when we dropped back there; then I thought it was all over with."

"I confess to having been startled myself for a second," I replied frankly, "for I was afraid we were not high enough. We ran into a 'pocket,' where the air was too thin to yield sufficient support. This is one of the mysteries of the atmosphere not yet sufficiently understood to be guarded against. I am flying much higher now."

"How high?"

I glanced at the gauge.

"About fifteen hundred feet."

"And you know where you are going?"

"Only vaguely," and I drew out the map drawer below my seat, showing her the chart beneath the glass. "This all occurred so suddenly I had no time to study the matter out. You must know better than I where we can land safely. My thought was the Michigan shore; about here, perhaps, where there seems to be few towns," and I pointed to the spot.

"Why, that would take us entirely across the lake!"

"Well, what of it?" laughingly.

"There is no more danger in flying above water than land, and we are already well on our way. Besides when the sun drives this mist aside, we are far less likely to be noticed by anyone below."

"But it seems more perilous," she insisted, staring down into the swirling cloud with wide opened eyes. "Of course it is foolish, but it startles me to know there is nothing but water down there. I suppose that you feel differently, Monsieur."

To be continued.

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